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Agenda item 8

DRAFT REPORT

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Addendum

PROGRAMME QUESTIONS: PROPOSED PROGRAMME BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM 1998-1999 (item 4 (a))

Section 16. Economic and social development in Africa

1. At its 19th meeting, on 24 June 1997, the Committee considered section 16, Economic and social development in Africa, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999.

Discussion

2. Many delegations expressed support for the programme of work in this section, which was one of the priority areas of the Organization. They also welcomed the reform process carried out by the Economic Commission for Africa (ECA). A number of delegations encouraged the secretariat of the Economic Commission to continue in its pursuit of professional and managerial excellence.

3. Several delegations expressed satisfaction at the efforts made to refocus the programme of activities on fewer core issues. Some delegations felt that the programme of work did not give adequate treatment to the core issues of trade and finance, industry, transport and communication, and agriculture in their entirety. It was explained that while these issues did not in themselves constitute separate subprogrammes, they were major areas of focus in the programme of work under various subprogrammes.

4. Some delegations welcomed the proposed reduction of posts under executive direction and management and programme support and the growth reflected under the substantive programme of work. A number of delegations noted that the Commission had become more streamlined. They felt, however, that the resource base was still too low and needed to be increased significantly. They also felt that technological innovation and decentralization through the new subregional development centres, and the training of staff should be expanded to further enhance the effectiveness and efficiency of the Commission.

5. Some delegations encouraged the efforts being made to mobilize more extrabudgetary resources to complement regular budget resources, which were not commensurate with the development needs of the region and the challenges facing the Commission. They referred to resolution 830 (XXXII) of the ECA Conference of Ministers requesting the Secretary-General, and also inviting the General Assembly, to allocate sufficient resources to the Commission in order for it to implement its programme of work. To this end, they stressed that the priority accorded to African recovery, which has been reiterated on many occasions by the Secretary-General, should be reflected in the allocation of resources.

6. One delegation was of the view that no resource growth should have been proposed under this section following the outcome of the reform currently under way, and that the contributions to the African Institute for Economic Development and Planning (IDEP) and the United Nations Institute for the Prevention of Crime and the Treatment of Offenders (UNAFRI) should be discontinued. Some other delegations stressed that IDEP and UNAFRI were statutorily linked to the Commission and that the contributions supported core and essential functions at these institutions. They further felt that those functions should be supported under the regular budget.

7. Some delegations reiterated the importance of better coordination at the field level between the Commission and the relevant United Nations specialized agencies operating in Africa, and of full respect for the delineation of their responsibilities.

Conclusions and recommendations

8. The Committee recommended to the General Assembly that it approve the programme narrative of section 16, Economic and social development in Africa, of the proposed programme budget for the biennium 1998-1999, subject to further consideration as stated in paragraph 35 of the introduction.